

Whittemore Building  
215-219 Bank Street  
Waterbury  
New Haven County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-409

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

WHITTEMORE BUILDING

HABS No. CT-409

Location: 215-219 Bank Street, Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut

USGS Waterbury Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 18.662250. 4601740

Present Owner: Waterbury Renewal and Economic Development Agency  
Leavenworth Street  
Waterbury, Connecticut 06702

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The Whittemore Building, which owes its name to a leading Naugatuck Valley industrialist - John Howard Whittemore, was built on the south-west corner of land which he bought in 1901 and developed into a single commercial property called the Pritchard Block (199-219 Bank Street). Whittemore was president of the Naugatuck Malleable Iron Company, a director and vice president of the Colonial Trust Company of Waterbury, as well as a major real estate investor and developer in Waterbury and other sections of New England, Chicago, Cleveland, and the west.

Built as an infill between two elaborate yet notably different buildings, the more reserved Georgian Revival building was designed by Wilfred E. Griggs, a Waterbury architect who made a visible impact on the city's appearance in its turn-of-the-century expansion. The Whittemore Building is modest in comparison to Griggs' other designs, but appropriate and straightforward in relation to its neighbors.

More valuable than the individual significance of the Whittemore Building is its place within Bank Street Historic District: a contiguous row of large, multi-story buildings set close to the sidewalk, highly decorative and diverse in style, yet closely related in size, scale, and materials. Together the four buildings are typical of Waterbury's commercial architecture at the turn of the century. They also represent the city's prosperity and its economic growth during that period.

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### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1904
2. Architect: Wilfred Elizur Griggs (1866-1918), the son of Waterbury manufacturer Henry C. Griggs, was educated in New Haven and New York. He returned to Waterbury in 1891. Griggs is considered the city's major early twentieth-century architect. He designed many landmark buildings in or near the central business district, and they have contributed significantly to Waterbury's built environment. Included among them are: the Y.M.C.A. Building (1892), Odd Fellows Hall (1895), the Elton Hotel (1905), the Masonic Temple (1911), and Waterbury's first eight story, steel-framed office tower, the Lilly Building (1912).
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office of Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut.
  - 1904 Party Wall Agreement, July 9, 1904, recorded in Volume 178, p. 559.  
C.J. Griggs to John H. Whittemore. (Agreement to build Whittemore Building against Griggs Building's north wall with lightwell stipulation.)
  - 1909 Deed, May 26, 1909, recorded in Volume 233, p. 203.  
John H. Whittemore to Harris and Gertrude Whittemore.
  - 1919 Deed, June 10, 1919, recorded in Volume 303, p. 203.  
Gertrude Whittemore to Stephen J. Walsh.
  - 1928 Deed, July 5, 1928, recorded in Volume 424, p. 390.  
Stephen J. Walsh to Nathan Spiegel and David Kaplan.
  - 1938 Mortgage Foreclosure, March 30, 1938, recorded in Volume 492, p. 10.  
Nathan Spiegel and David Kaplan to New York

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- 1943 Deed, December 29, 1943, recorded in Volume 532, p. 540.  
Martin Rubin to Isabelle Greenblatt for 119-219 Bank Street.
- 1960 Deed, June 29, 1960, recorded in Volume 798, p. 363.  
Isabelle and Lewis Greenblatt to Alexander Burger.
- 1972 Deed, May 19, 1972, recorded in Volume 1037, p. 263.  
Alexander Burger to City of Waterbury

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: No information found.
5. Original plans and construction: No original drawings, plans, or early photographs have been located.

The building's footprint, exterior walls, and basement and first floor structural system are minimally altered although all original interior partitions and stairs have been removed. Consequently, physical inspection is the only practical method for determining the original plans and construction of the now altered spaces.

It appears that the upper floors were originally supported by interior bearing walls running east-west. These walls partitioned individual office and apartment space from a central staircase connecting all floors. Access from Bank Street was centered between the two cast-iron piers. Retail shops were most likely located to the right and left upon entering the main stairhall on the first floor.

6. Alterations and additions: The only major exterior change to the Whittemore Building has been the addition of a fire escape attached to the rear. The entire east elevation is now obscured and many large windows have been filled with concrete block. On the west facade, modernization of the storefront has resulted in the moving of the main central entrance to the far right side, and the addition of large aluminum-framed display windows.

Interior alterations and structural changes are extensive, actively departing from the building's

original spaces and circulation patterns. Not much more than a shell remains. On all levels except the second, the north party wall has been broken through and ramped to provide access to 207-211 Bank Street. Access on the second floor is through the lightwell, which has been converted into an enclosed passageway. In the north-east corner, a new stairwell has been added to replace the original central stairhall. On the upper floors, original bearing walls have been replaced with an assortment of short beams, posts, and lally columns. The only interior partitions are temporary and located on the first floor.

Physical evidence suggests that most of the alterations and additions discussed above occurred around or after the 1950's when the building was converted into a furniture warehouse.

B. Historical Context:

From its date of erection in 1904 until its sale to the City of Waterbury in 1972, the Whittemore Building has always been owned and operated as part of one commercial block: three buildings, numbered 199 through 219 Bank Street, collectively called Pritchard's Block. This name originates from the Pritchard family whose homestead once stood on the large site and who began its commercial development between 1888 and 1891 with the original Pritchard Building, numbers 207 to 211 Bank Street. In 1901, the Pritchard heirs sold their property to John H. Whittemore, who flanked the Pritchard Building with two new structures to the north and south. The northernmost building, numbers 199 to 205 Bank Street, has been demolished, but the Whittemore Building remains as the southernmost structure within Pritchard's Block.

John H. Whittemore was a leading Waterbury industrialist and businessman, who supplemented his income with real estate developments. He hired Wilfred E. Griggs, perhaps Waterbury's most popular architect at the beginning of the 20th century, to design his building. The property stayed in the Whittemore family for fifteen years. Early tenants included shoe and clothing stores, and apartment renters on the upper floors. Patches of residential-type wallpaper still exist on the fourth floor, which may indicate that the apartments were occupied until the building's warehouse conversion.

In 1943 the Greenblatt family, who owned much real estate

in Waterbury, bought Pritchard's Block, subsequently known to Waterbury residents as the Davis & Nye Block. This name originates from the demolished Davis & Nye Building, once located at 199-205 Bank Street. During the middle half of this century, the Whittemore and Pritchard buildings served as an office furniture warehouse while the ground floors housed retail shops.

In 1972, The City of Waterbury bought, condemned, and planned to demolish the Whittemore Building along with many other historic Waterbury properties. Concerned citizens, in an attempt to save Waterbury's central business district's historic architecture from demolition, formed the group WATCH: Waterbury Action to Conserve Our Heritage, Inc. WATCH brought a suit against the City's Urban Renewal Agency and HUD in 1978, arguing that national review procedures must be followed before the demolition of any historic property. In 1979, under the National Historic Preservation Act, the U.S. Second District Court of Appeals ruled that as long as federal agencies retain funding control, they must consider the effect of their projects on historic properties. In other words, Waterbury's Urban Renewal Agency, still under the contract with HUD, could only raze buildings declared by the National Advisory Council on Historic Places not eligible for the National Register. The court's ruling in favor of WATCH set a national precedent for towns owning historic properties.

## PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Whittemore Building is a simply styled Georgian Revival building. Its symmetrical facade is a good example of the style: red brick with stone trim and projecting brick quoins, small-paned sash windows with splayed lintels and multiple keystones, and an overhanging cornice with modillions, a wide frieze, and dentils.
2. Condition of the fabric: The exterior walls are in fair condition. There are patches of inappropriate brick repointing, brick damage at points where the fire escape has been bolted to the wall, and incongruous masonry window and door infills. All original partitions, stairs, and their bearing walls have been removed. The four floors and basement have all experienced moderate to severe water damage. Most

verticle elements (walls, columns, etc.) must be replaced or reinforced. The roof is in need of replacement.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The four-story, four-bay building is almost rectangular in plan, with two light wells, each 4'-0" wide, cut out from the north and south sides of the rectangle. The building measures 38'6" wide by 78'-0" (north wall) and 76'-0" (south wall) deep and 49'-0" high at the top of the cornice. The 2'-0" discrepancy is due to the west facade, which is angled to parallel Bank Street. (See Site Plan, page 13.)
2. Foundation: The foundation is of large rubble fieldstone measuring 2'-6" thick at its own walls and 2'-0" at the party walls.
3. Walls: The west street facade is of dark-red brick and bright-white limestone details. Four painted cast-iron piers frame the storefront. The brick is laid in a flemish bond with an alternate black brick header at every course. Limestone molded sills and splayed lintels with multiple keystones detail each upper story window. At the fourth story the sills become a continuous molded band with dentils, echoing the roof and storefront cornices. Projecting brick quoins frame the second and third stories, becoming recessed at the fourth.

Though the east wall is mostly obscured by a large, sheet metal enclosed fire escape, it is of red brick laid in a standard running bond with an alternate header every sixth course. The north and south light well's are the same as the east wall.

4. Structural system framing: A description of the building's structure is paraphrased from the "Central Business District Rehabilitation Study", page 37: Since this is an infill building, it has an unusual structure. The main vertical supports at the basement and first floor levels were pulled five feet away from the party walls. This allowed for excavation and support of the light-well walls which begin on the second floor. On the two lower levels, the columns are wooden posts becoming lallys on the second floor. In the basement, the 12"x12" posts run north-south at

about nine feet on-center, and support 10"-steel I-beams which in turn support heavy timber 4"x12" joists. The wooden posts are raised above the floor to prevent rotting, and iron collars are used at the bearing points. On the first floor, the wooden posts are round, and a transfer system of beams permits a change in structure from post and beam to bearing wall supported joists on the upper floors. These bearing walls have subsequently been removed and replaced with an assortment of short beams, posts, and lally columns.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: There is an enclosed, sheet-metal fire escape addition covering the entire east elevation.
6. Chimneys: The Whittemore has no chimneys per se. There do exist, however, four small flues (1'-0" square) which extend up to the coping level on the north and south walls. They are now covered with tar.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are three entrances to the building. The first, on the far right side of the west facade, is a non-original doorway, pulled back from and enclosed by the storefront facade. The other two entrances, on the east wall, are large double doors with a low-rise arched transom above. These were most likely the retail stores' receiving entrances. The vertically-planked doors, although in poor condition, may be the originals.
  - b. Windows: The modern display windows on the first floor west elevation are separated into three parts by original cast-iron piers. Both the transom area above and the base below are of plywood sheathing. The upper floors, of the same elevation, each have four windows organized as four bays. The middle two openings are wider than the ends and divided into three parts. All windows have double-hung, eight-over-one sashes, except for the four-over-one sidelights of the middle openings. Limestone molded sills and splayed lintels with multiple keystones detail each upper floor window, except at the fourth floor where the sills become a continuous band with dentils.



The east elevation window openings all have 4" rise segmental arches with 6" high granite sills. Many are filled in with concrete blocks except on the first floor where closed wood shutters still remain.

The openings in the light wells on the north and south elevations are the same in form as their east elevation counterparts, but here more regular in size and covered with plywood.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: This unusual roof has a low-pitched butterfly/V-shape. The rafters, running north-south, are pocketed into the party walls, and step gradually down to a low centered ridge. The cover is non-original built-up roofing with tar patches.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The west facade is crowned by a painted sheet-metal cornice. It is characterized by its 1'-9" overhang, modillions, a wide plain frieze, dentils, and copper flashing at the top. The west elevation and light well walls are finished with a red clay-tile coping.

There are two roof drains located on the north and south ends of the low middle ridge.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floorplans: See pages 13 through 19.
2. Stairways: There is a non-original enclosed stairwell in the building's north-east corner. This has replaced the original central staircase.
3. Flooring: The 3"-4" wood flooring has in all areas been covered and/or severely damaged. Non-original coverings include linoleum, tile and carpet. Where the wood is still visible, water has warped and discolored it.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Only the peripheral brick walls remain. Plaster and paint or wallpaper finishes are in poor condition. Ceilings are either exposed joists or non-original acoustic tile.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are no remaining interior doors. Various sized openings do exist on all floors in the north party wall.
- b. Windows: The wood window moldings, in limited areas on the upper floors, are of simple design and painted various colors. There is a 3'-0" x 5'-0" vent-capped skylight on the fourth floor which is in poor condition.

6. Decorative features and trim: There are simple molded baseboards in limited areas on the upper floors.

7. Hardware: There is no remaining, original, or notable hardware.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. HVAC: The building was probably originally heated by individual coal-burning ovens. Physical evidence shows four flue openings on each story located about seven feet up from the finished floor. All are now capped. Later, the building was equipped with radiators on all floors. There is no furnace in the basement and this suggests that the altered building was serviced by equipment in the neighboring 207-211 Bank Street structure.

- b. Lighting: There are no remaining original fixtures.

- c. Plumbing: Storm pipes from the roof feed directly into the building, drop down to the basement on the south side, and then out the building's south-west corner into the city's storm main. This is possibly the same route taken by the sewer pipes, but no W.C. fixtures remain.

9. Alterations to be constructed in 1987-1989: In the Whittemore, the project will incorporate retail and office spaces. The first floor will accommodate one or two retail shops, accessible from a central entrance off of the street. The upper floors will each have two office spaces, a new central corridor

connecting all four buildings, and a fire stair off of the corridor at the north end of the building. New interior partitions will be limited to the corridor, stairwell, and any shaftwalls. Floor joists will be reinforced, and a new load-bearing column system will replace the inadequate lally columns on the upper floors. Existing walls will be patched where necessary and repainted.

Exterior work will follow appropriate and recommended restoration methods. New construction will include a new storefront and small rooftop addition, both in keeping with the building's proportion, rhythm and scale. The fire escape on the east elevation will be removed as well as any concrete block window infills.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Whittemore Building is the second northernmost of four remaining turn-of-the-century commercial buildings, now forming the Bank Street Historic District. The district is located on the east side of Bank Street between Grand Street and Interstate 84. The National Register's Inventory-Nomination form for this district describes the site: "The boundaries of the district reflect the physical isolation of these buildings from the rest of Waterbury's downtown. Formerly the district was a continuation of the commercial area which extends west on Grand Street and north on Bank, but today strong visual interruptions make these four buildings a cohesive unit which stands better on its own".
2. Historic landscape design: The Whittemore Building stands flush with Bank Street's sidewalk and its neighbors to the north and south.
3. No Outbuildings.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: None to be found or known.
- C. Interviews: None.
- D. Bibliography:
  1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Clerk's Office of the City of Waterbury, Waterbury, CT. Waterbury Land Records.

Waterbury Action to Conserve Our Heritage, Inc. Scrapbook. Historic preservation activities in Waterbury: 1974-1986. Compiled by WATCH treasurer Elsie Ruffleth. Waterbury, Connecticut.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Anderson, Joseph, ed. The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut. From the Aboriginal Period to the Year 1895. Volume II. New Haven: The Price and Lee Company, 1986.

Connecticut Historical Commission. Hartford, CT. Historic Resources Inventory Form: "Waterbury Architectural Survey." 1978.

Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, CT. Waterbury Action to Conserve Our Heritage (WATCH). "Central District Rehabilitation Study." 1980.

Pape, William J. History of Waterbury and the Naugatuck Valley, Connecticut. Chicago, New York: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918, 3 volumes.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places. Inventory-Nomination Form: "Bank Street Historic District, Waterbury, CT."

Waterbury Renewal and Economic Development Agency, Waterbury, CT. "Central Business District Project Historic Survey." 1978.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: None known.

F. Supplemental material: Graphic Documentation, see pages 13 through 19.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Prior to altering this historic building, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has been required to document it by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This is pursuant to the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Section 106.

WHITTEMORE BUILDING

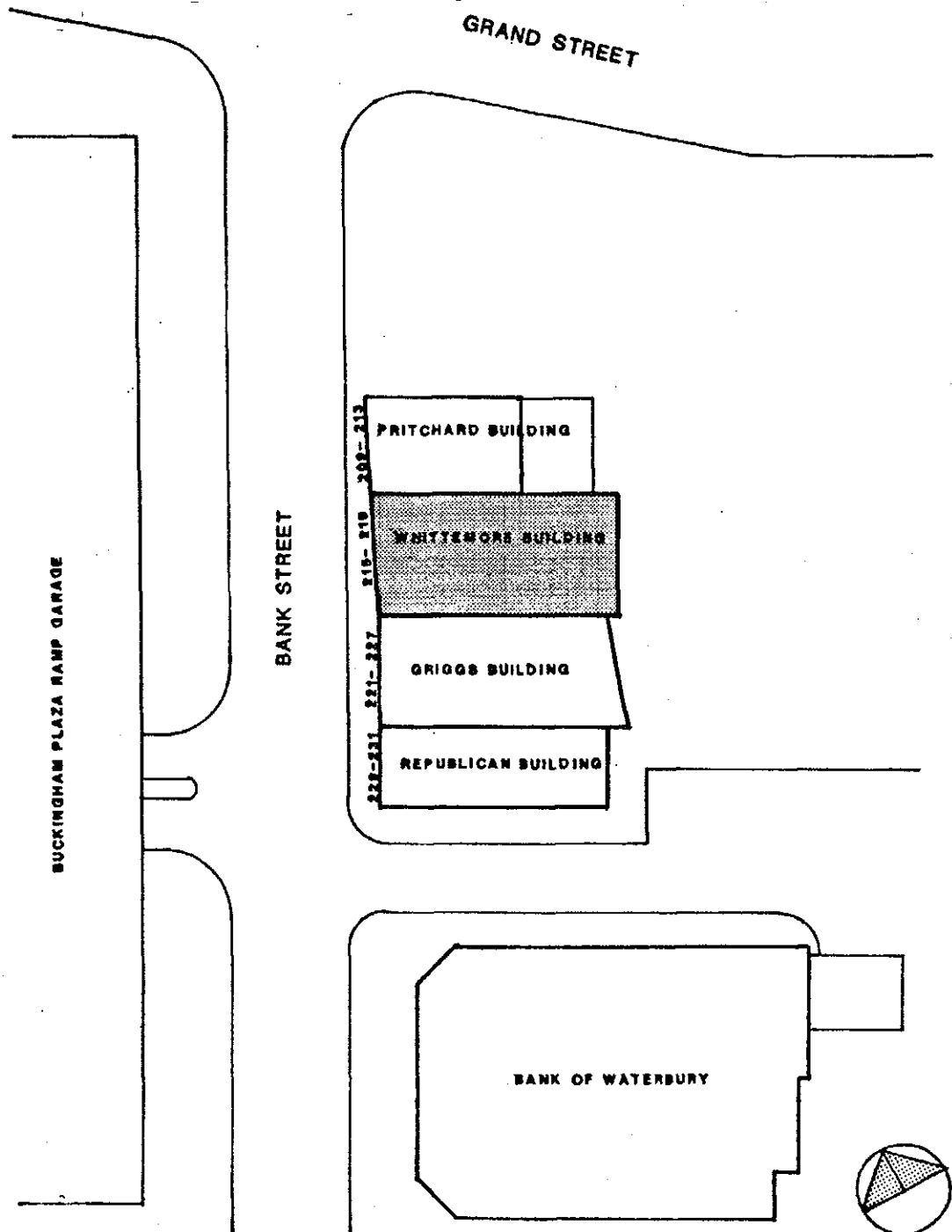
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Prepared by: Christina Wasch  
Title: Architectural Assistant  
Affiliation: Michael S. Stein, A.I.A.  
Date: September 1987

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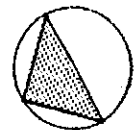
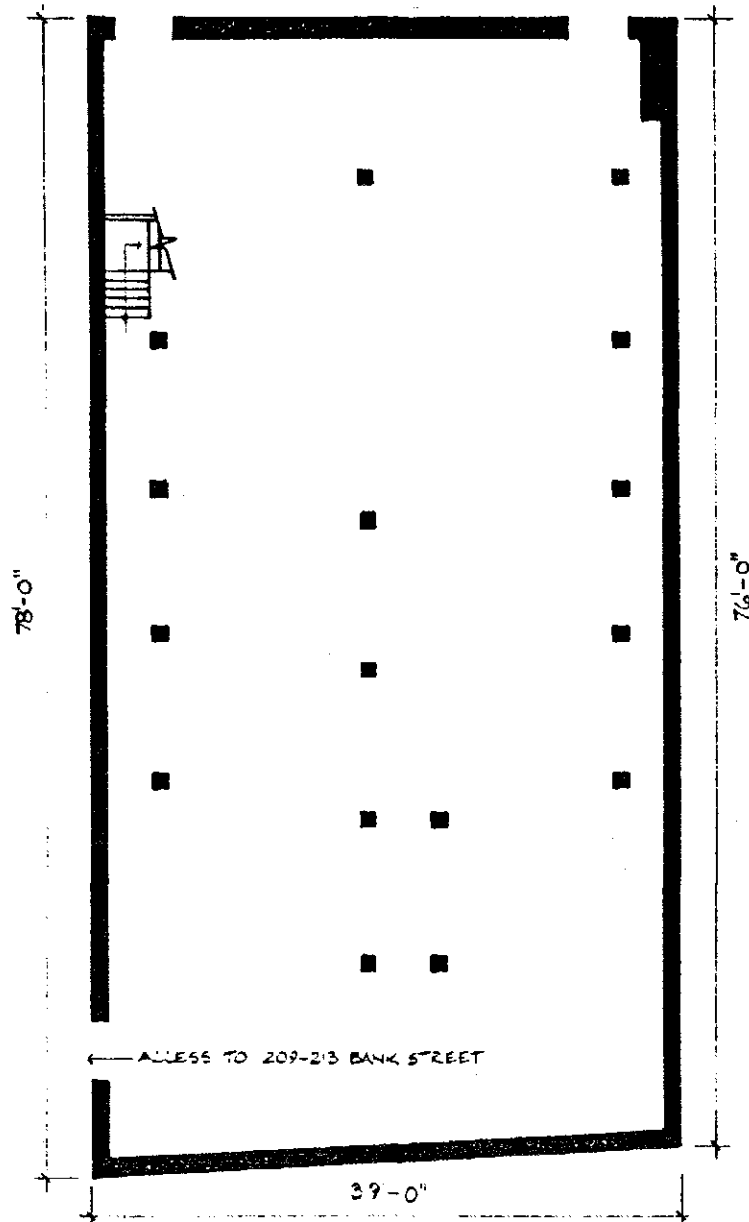
SITE PLAN

DATE: SEPT. 1987

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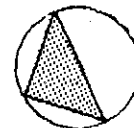
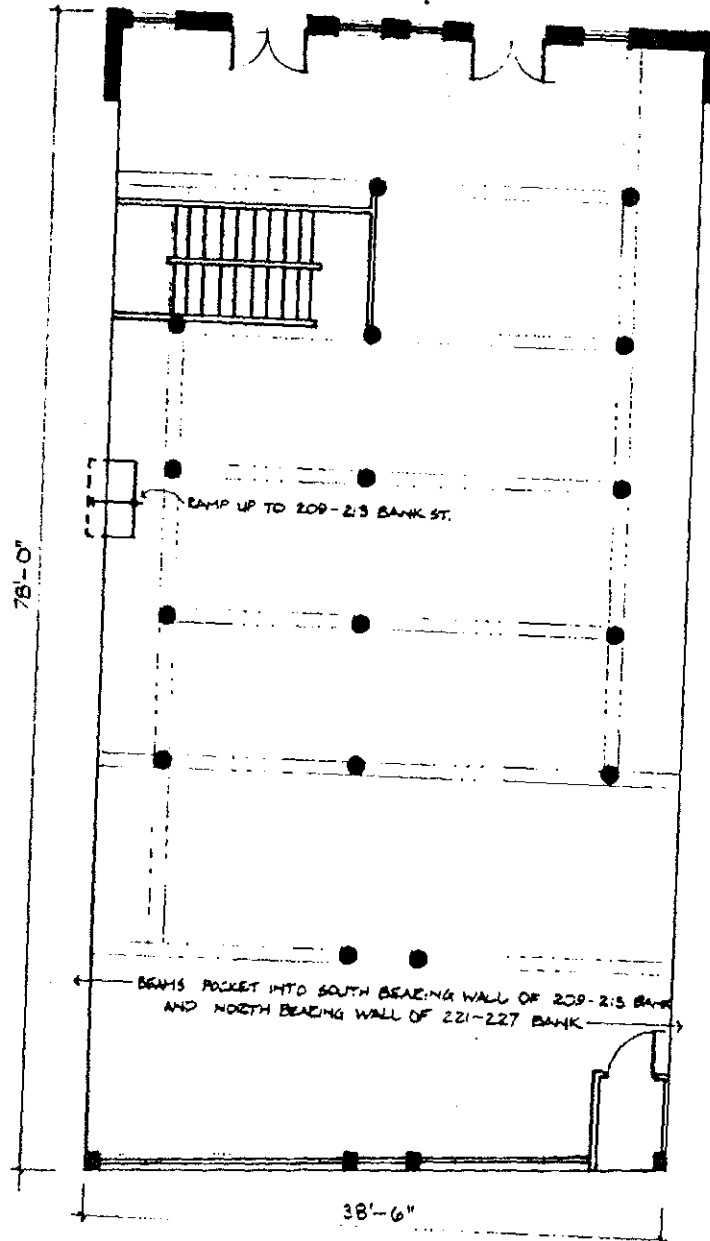
BASEMENT PLAN

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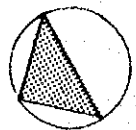
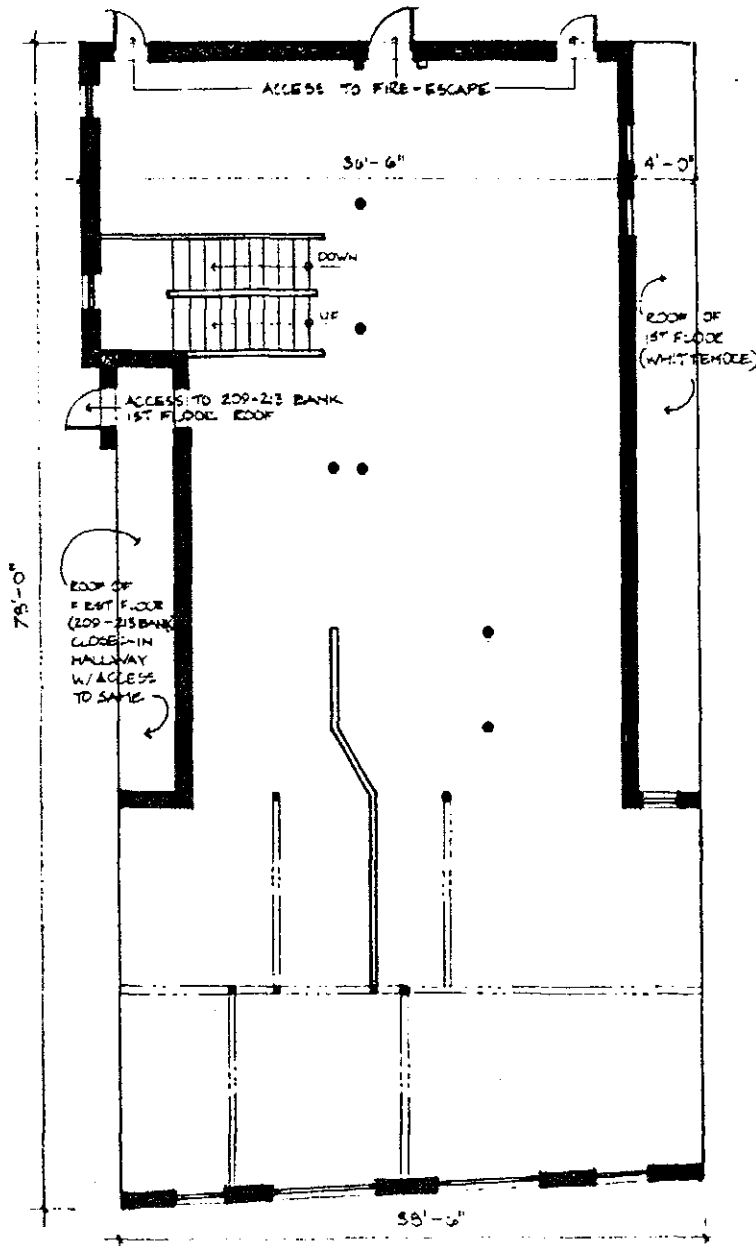
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DATE: SEPT. 1987





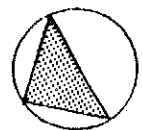
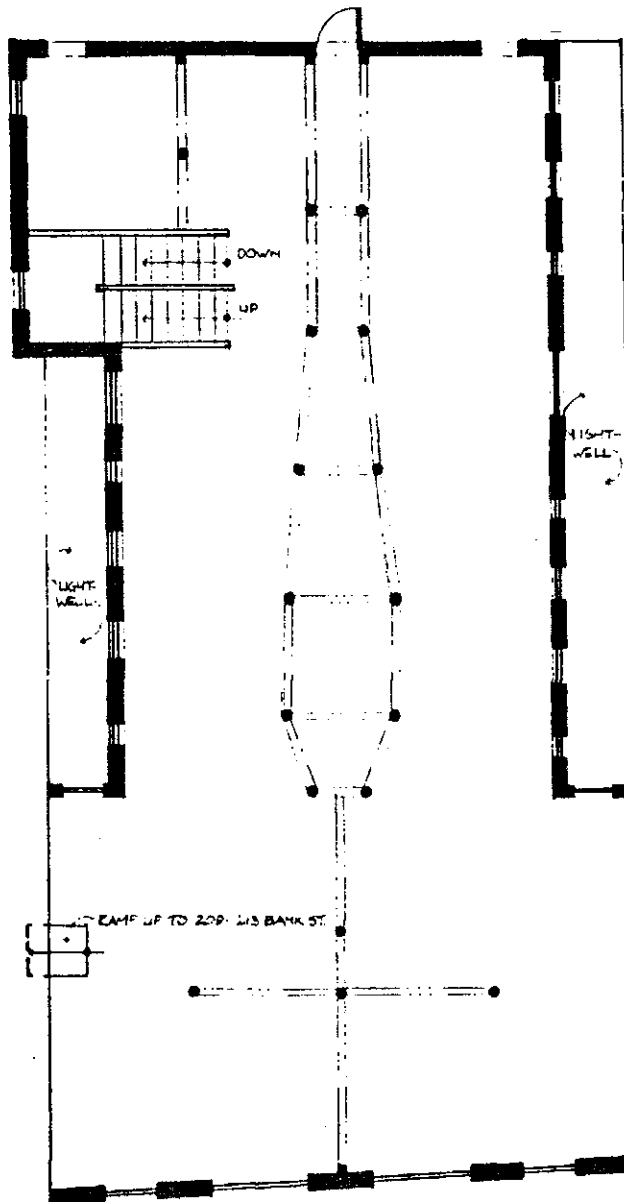
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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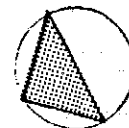
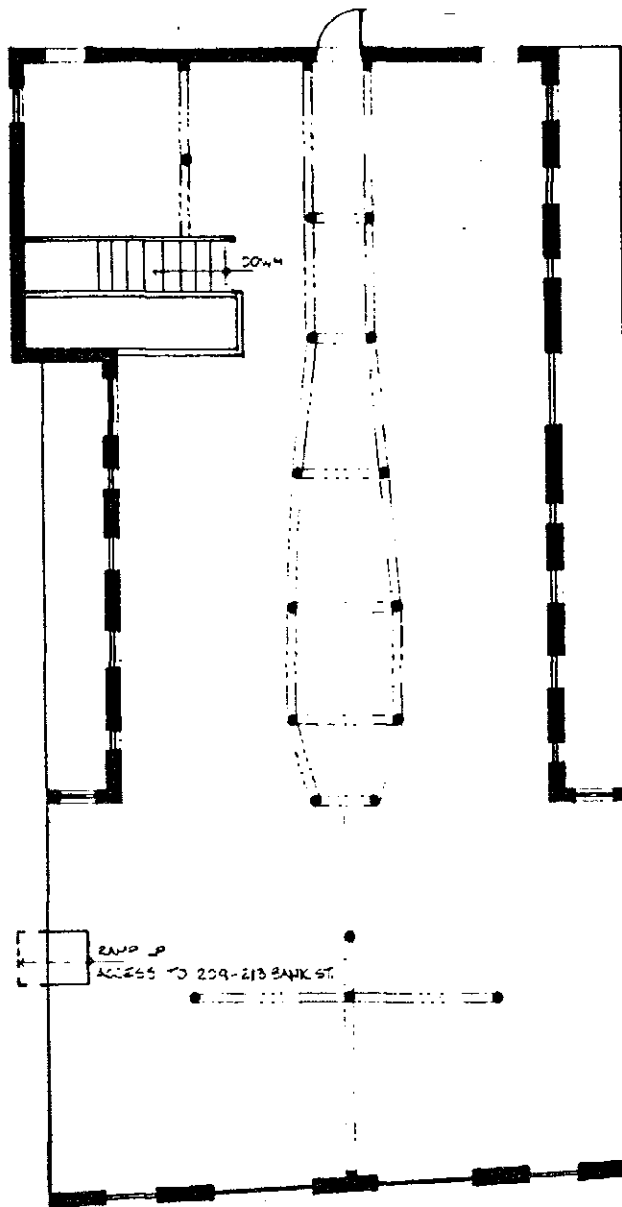
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

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WHITTEMORE BUILDING

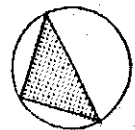
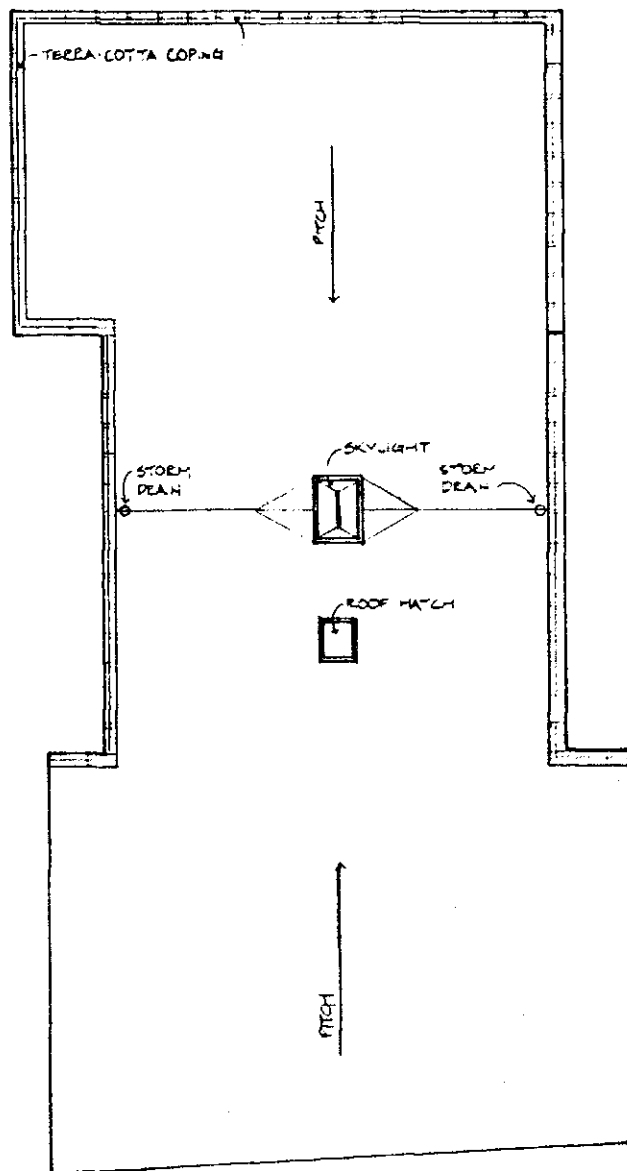
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FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

DATE: SEPT. 1987



ROOF PLAN

DATE: SEPT. 1987